

BEHAVIORS OF 6–8-YEAR-OLD CHILDREN



Situation #4: Bullying in school

Lately, Melissa does not want to go to school. She is 8, overweight, and shy. She has started to complain that kids at school have been tormenting her, making fun of her, and calling her names.

Why is this happening?

Because

- She is a victim of bullying.
- There are some children who feel they are more important and stronger, and they intimidate others whom they see as weaker or smaller.
- Bullying allows some children to dominate others and get what they want, when they want.
- Peers have great influence on children of this age.

What can adults do in the situation described here?

1. Understand what bullying is and its consequences

- Bullying is the frequent use of physical or verbal intimidation and occurs when there is no adult supervision at home or in the school.
- Bullying occurs when there is a difference of power: The stronger, older child hurts the younger, weaker, or socially isolated.
- The consequences of bullying include anxiety, shame, depression, seeing oneself as a failure and as unattractive.

2. If your child is the bully,

- Talk to him/her to understand why he/she needs to bully others.
- Establish consequences and withdraw some privileges.
- Look for professional help if the child's behavior is part of a complicated set of emotional problems.
- Talk to the school about how they can help.

3. If your child is the victim,

- Have loving conversations to talk about your child's feelings about the situation.
- Teach your child to ask for adults' help.
- Encourage your child not to fight back.
- Talk with your child's teacher, counselor, and principal to call their attention to the problem.

4. If your child is a witness,

- Tell him/her to inform an adult.
- Encourage your child to be kind to the victim.
- Tell your child to never encourage a bully and to show that he/she doesn't approve of such behavior.

How can adults prevent bullying?

- Be a positive role model and never bully someone else.
- Encourage schools to implement prevention programs.
- Participate in the school's existing prevention programs.
- Talk to the PTA, principal, teachers, and counselors about providing constant adult supervision in the school.

